The Relation of the Illative Sense to the Act of Assent According to J. H. Newman

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THE RELATION OF THE ILLATIVE SENSE
TO THE ACT OF ASSENT ACCORDING
TO J. H. NEWMAN

by

John D. Ryan, S.J.

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of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
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LIFE

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM
OF ASSENT

Early in 1870, John Henry Newman finished his last great work which he modestly entitled *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. Since the writing of the Grammar critical opinion as to its value and meaning has been strikingly divided. This divergence can be traced back to many factors: Newman's complicated and detailed style, his personal and often strange use of terminology, and the depth and originality of his thought. The primary difficulty, however, seems to stem from Newman's purpose and approach. All admit that the Grammar is a difficult book to understand. It begins without prefatory remarks, without explanation of over-all purpose, and, seemingly, without any easily intelligible internal order. Moreover, Newman handles an old topic—assent and certitude, and the process of reaching them—with an unexpected and sometimes unsuspected originality. The result according to Father Francis Bacchus is that

The Grammar of Assent is one of the most obscure books that has ever been written. Distinguished philosophers have been known openly to avow that they could make nothing of it, and, without being quite so outspoken, its critics as a rule betray the same sense of its obscurity by the eagerness with which they fasten upon irrelevant side-issues when discussing it, or by the vague, non-committal character of their utterances . . . . It is the old story of readers unable to get into touch with their author because their minds are moving in

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one circle of ideas and his in another . . . . His readers are not prepared for originality on so large a scale. They cannot conceive that there is scope for it. Some freshness in handling the details of old controversies is the utmost they expect.2

One reason for this obscurity in the Grammar, real or not, is the difficulty of expressing adequately the ideas contained in it. Newman had thought through and prayed over its main themes for over thirty years. He had begun the Grammar many times only to leave off because he could not clarify to his own satisfaction the ideas which for years he had vaguely and then more clearly realized. The major and important insight which was to impel him to work in earnest had come in 1866, only four years before he finally finished his work.

Newman's state of mind before, during, and after writing the Grammar is aptly reflected in this entry in his journal of late 1870. "Since I published my Essay on Assent last March, I have meant to make a memorandum on the subject of it. It is the upshot of a very long desire and effort--I don't know the worth of it, but I am happier to have at length done it and got it off my hands . . . . The book itself I have aimed at writing this twenty years;--and now that it is written I do not quite recognize it for what it was meant to be, though I suppose it is such. I have made more attempts at writing it, than I can enumerate."3

However, even with these elements of obscurity, Newman's general purpose is easily discovered by reading the title of his book; it is a grammar of assent. The sense in which Newman uses grammar is in accordance with the fourth

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2Francis Bacchus, "How to Read the 'Grammar of Assent,'" The Month, CXLIII (February 1924), 106.
meaning given to the word by Webster’s Dictionary: "the elements or principles of any science or art . . ." Assent is the mental adherence to a proposition or a truth.

More specifically, Newman’s ultimate aim is not a general discussion and defense of assent in itself, but rather the justification of the assent present in an act of faith, the justification of the faith of the believer who cannot demonstrate the content of that faith. "I have said above," writes Wilfrid Ward, "that the one avowed object of the 'Essay on Assent' was to show that simple and uneducated minds could have rational grounds for belief in Christianity without knowledge of its scientific evidences." Newman never explicitly states this purpose in the Grammar, although he does devote two chapters to showing how one proceeds in giving assent to various truths of faith. Further evidence of purpose is found on the title page of the Grammar in the quotation from St. Ambrose which indicates the motif of the book: Non in dialectica complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum. It is not God’s pleasure to bring His people to salvation through arguments, through syllogisms.

The need for such a justification of faith is clear if one realizes to what extent rationalism had conquered the minds of intellectuals in the late nineteenth century. Newman briefly states the main arguments of this philosophy in a sermon which he preached at the opening of an English seminary in 1873,

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three years after the publication of the Grammar. He says:

The elementary proposition of this new philosophy which is now so threatening is this—that in all things we must go by reason, in nothing by faith, that things are known and are to be received so are as they can be proved. Its advocates say, all other knowledge has proof—why should religion be an exception? And the mode of proof is to advance from what we know to what we do not know, from sensible and tangible facts to sound conclusions . . . . Why should not that method which has done so much in physics, avail also as regards that higher knowledge which the world has believed it had gained through revelation? There is no revelation from above. There is no exercise of faith. Seeing and proving is the only ground for believing. They go on to say, that since proof admits of degrees, a demonstration can hardly be had except in mathematics; we never can have simple knowledge; truths are only probably such. So that faith is a mistake in two ways. First, because it usurps the place of reason, and secondly because it implies an absolute assent to doctrines, and is dogmatic, which absolute assent is irrational.7

The "new philosophy" which Newman mentions was in fact an old enemy of his. It was the religious liberalism of his Oxford days under a slightly different guise. This Oxford liberalism attempted to subject revealed doctrine to the judgment of the human intellect alone; it claimed to pass sentence on doctrines of faith which in truth rested on Divine Authority.

To gain a clearer idea of the over-glorification of reason implied in the philosophy of religious rationalism, one has only to read the propositions listed in the Apologia Pro Vita Sua which were current during Newman's university days. Among them are the following four:

1. No religious tenet is important, unless reason shows it to be so. Therefore, e.g. the doctrine of the Athanasian Creed is not to be insisted on, unless it tends to convert the soul . . . .

2. No one can believe what he does not understand. Therefore, e.g. there are no mysteries in true religion.

3. No theological doctrine is any thing more than an opinion which happens to be held by bodies of men. Therefore, e.g. no creed, as such, is necessary for salvation.

4. It is dishonest in a man to make an act of faith in what he has not had brought home to him by actual proof. Therefore, e.g. the mass of men ought not absolutely to believe in the divine authority of the Bible.8

If one keeps in mind that reason for an Oxford rationalist was reduced to scientific demonstration, it will be easy to see that faith, besides being wholly subject to the investigation of reason, became equal to the conclusion of a syllogism. The obvious result of such an attitude was that anyone who could not justify his faith by formal and explicit proof was a sentimentalist. This, of course, placed most believers, both educated and uneducated, in the unenviable position of being irrational and superstitious.

Furthermore, absolute and unconditioned assent to a doctrine of faith was itself unjustifiable. Absolute and unconditioned assent could be given only to a strict demonstration. But such demonstration was hardly to be expected except in mathematics. The assent of faith, therefore, since it lay outside the area of strict demonstration, could be given conditionally, but never absolutely. One might at best have high probability in matters of faith and call it practical certitude.

The religious rationalism of 1870 differed little from the rationalism or religious liberalism of Newman's Oxford days, except that it was no longer more

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or less confined to certain clergymen of the Church of England, but had become common among scientists and intellectuals as well.

It was in order to justify the assent of faith that Newman had first to justify assent itself as an absolute and unconditioned rational act. This analysis and defense of assent is the direct and proximate aim of the Grammar. The method used by Newman is one of psychological analysis of the mind in its operations of inference and assent. As such the Grammar has much philosophical import.

Newman's chief adversary in the matter of assent was John Locke and his "a priori" epistemological theories. Locke held that there are degrees of assent and that assent should be proportionate to the given evidence. If the evidence was strictly demonstrable (or perceptual), and therefore certain, the consequent assent should be absolute and unconditioned. If the evidence was only probable, as in reasoning about all concrete matters, then the assent should only be a probable and conditioned one. Newman summarizes the propositions and conclusions of this doctrine as follows: "The authors to whom I refer wish to maintain that there are degrees of assent, and that, as the reasons for a proposition are strong or weak, so is the assent. It follows from this that absolute assent has no legitimate exercise, except as ratifying acts of intuition or demonstration. What is thus brought home to us is indeed to be accepted unconditionally; but, as to reasonings in concrete matters, they are never more

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than probabilities, and the probability in each conclusion which we draw is the measure of our assent to that conclusion. 10

However, Locke admitted that some propositions bordered so near to strict proof and certainty that an absolute assent was given, as if the knowledge were certain. Nevertheless such assent was illogical, immoral, and contrary to a love of truth.

Newman opposes Locke on many points. The first and most general criticism is that Locke's views are not in accordance with experience. "He (Locke) takes a view of the human mind, in relation to inference and assent, which to me seems theoretical and unreal. Reasonings and convictions which I deem natural and legitimate, he apparently would call irrational, enthusiastic, perverse, and immoral; and that, as I think, because he consults his own ideal of how the mind ought to act, instead of interrogating human nature, as an existing thing, as it is found in the world."11

More specifically, Newman argues that Locke's position on degrees of assent confuses assent with the inferential conclusion. The result is that assent becomes the "echo" or "shadow" of an inference and not a distinct act. If, when one assents, he does precisely what he does in inferring—except that his assent is a reproduction of his inference—then assent "is simply superfluous, in a psychological point of view, and a curiosity for subtle minds, and the sooner it is got out of the way the better."12

10 Ibid., 159.
11 Ibid., 164.
12 Ibid., 165.
Moreover, there are many cases of assents which are given in concrete matters on evidence short of immediate perception and strict demonstration. Rather obvious examples are "Great Britain is an island," "There actually exist cities which go by the names of New York, Rome, and Berlin," "Roosevelt died in 1945," "I was born," "I shall die," "My friend is true to me." These propositions, strictly speaking, cannot be proved, nor are they here and now objects of perception. Yet, under normal circumstances, unconditioned assent is given to them.

Here difficulties arise. Are such absolute and unconditioned assents valid? Is not Locke's teaching more in accord with correct philosophical thinking? Is not the door opened to all kinds of error and subjectivism if the mind is allowed to "add" something in its interpretation of evidence? Newman answers that human nature commands these assents, that consequent error is accidental, and finally that Locke's theory is not in accord with the normal operations of the human mind. "Assent on reasonings not demonstrative," he says, "is too widely recognized an act to be irrational, unless man's nature is irrational too familiar to the prudent and clear-minded to be an infirmity or an extravagance. None of us can think or act without the acceptance of truths, not intuitive, not demonstrated, yet sovereign."13

A question, however, still remains. What are the conditions necessary for assent in contingent matters? Granted that truth is the object of assent, why and how does the mind so often pass from inferences not strictly demonstrative

13Ibid., 179.
to absolute and unconditioned assent, to assent which is free from the fear of error? This is Newman's main problem in the Grammar of Assent. His task lies in determining how the mind attains truth in concrete matters by a process other than strict demonstration. "But what presents some difficulty is this, how it is that a conditional acceptance of a proposition,--such as is an act of inference,--is able to lead as it does, to an unconditional acceptance of it,--such as is assent; how it is that a proposition which is not, and cannot be, demonstrated, which at the highest can only be proved to be truth-like, not true, such as "I shall die," nevertheless claims and receives our unqualified adhesion."14

Newman's solution to the problem of truth in the concrete is the Illative Sense.15 The Illative Sense is, in brief, the power of the mind to arrive at truth in concrete, contingent circumstances. The purpose of this thesis will be to study Newman's Illative Sense in relation to assent, and as the solution to the problem of assent in contingent circumstances. This thesis will show how the mind, according to Newman, passes from a conditioned inference to an unconditioned assent. First, therefore, it will be necessary to show how, why, and under what conditions the Illative Sense concludes to truth in concrete matters. Secondly, it will be necessary to show how the Illative Sense acts as a sanction for assent.

The reason for this thesis is twofold. First, Newman's answer to the

14Tbid., 157-158.
15Newman usually capitalizes Illative Sense. I will, therefore, follow him in this throughout this thesis.
problem of assent is so often misunderstood because of the detail and descriptive manner of his writing, because of his peculiar terminology, and because of the intricacy of his thought. Secondly, most authors in their criticism of the Grammar either concern themselves with other important, thought less essential, problems, or treat the Illative Sense and the passage to truth and assent inadequately, and sometimes inaccurately, in a paraphrase or brief review. Thus Father D'Arcy in The Nature of Belief thinks the Illative Sense to be non-intellectual; 16 Father Boekraad in his The Personal Conquest of Truth According to J. H. Newman, while he considers the same general problem, hardly mentions the Illative Sense; 17 and Dr. Zeno in his Newman, Our Way to Certitude, concerns himself more with proofs for the Illative Sense than with an analysis of it. 18

Since Newman's terminology is too often a cause of misunderstanding, and since a grasp of his use of words is necessary for this thesis, the second chapter will be devoted to an explanation of the more important terms.


CHAPTER II

NEWMAN'S TERMINOLOGY

"Half the controversies in the world are verbal ones; and could they be brought to a plain issue, they would be brought to a prompt termination . . . . When men understand each other's meaning, they see, for the most part, that controversy is either superfluous or hopeless."

These words with which Newman ends his Oxford sermon, "Faith and Reason Contrasted as Habits of Mind" provide an appropriate opening for this second chapter. Much of the difficulty with misunderstanding of Newman's teaching during the past years has as its cause his personal use of words. The various interpretations of the term Illative Sense, for example, bear witness to this. Yet without an understanding of Newman's terminology, one can hardly hope to grasp his solution to the problem of truth in the concrete.

Therefore, this second chapter will first examine and explain the more important terms of the Grammar, and secondly show both their place in the work and their mutual relations to one another. The order followed is more or less

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2 D'Arcy, pp. 148-149, 151; Thomas Harper, "On Moral," The Month, XIII (November 1870), 545.
patterned after that employed by Newman. This procedure is not perfect, but it does avoid as far as possible any logical gaps.

CONCRETE AND ABSTRACT

The first important distinction is between concrete and abstract. That which is concrete is particular, singular, and individuated. Concrete matter (a term which Newman often uses) is contingent matter; it refers to the real world of individual beings who are subject to many laws, laws which often conflict with or modify one another. The concrete order is the area with which Newman is primarily concerned in his treatment of assent and the area in which the Illative Sense operates. The concrete order, because it is the order of things, of living persons, of color, sound, and touch, leads to action and practice. "Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma; no man will be a martyr for a conclusion. . . . No one, I say, will die for his own calculations; he dies for realities."

That which is abstract, on the other hand, is without individuating notes. The abstract order is the order of what Newman calls a notion, that is, of the universal idea and law, of the general non-particular statement. The abstract

5Ibid., 89.
6Ibid., 93.
7Ibid., 9.
refers also to anything that is potentially concrete, but actually abstract since it has not been experienced and realized. The name Stalingrad is abstract or in the notional order if one has never seen the city or if one has never formed any imaginative picture of it. "Varium et mutabile semper femina" is abstract if one has never had the experience of a fickle woman.

A science, according to Newman, since it deals with universal and general laws is limited to the abstract. In this order science arrives at truth, but its laws cannot determine the concrete. Scientific laws cannot be employed in the concrete order of interacting causalities without adjustment, without a call to experience and prudence. Moreover, demonstration, that is, strict proof, is impossible in the concrete because the terms of its premisses are abstract.

**APPREHENSION**

Newman calls knowledge of the concrete and abstract apprehension. By the apprehension of a proposition is meant one's imposition of a sense on its terms. Newman seems to equate apprehension with understanding in one section

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8Ibid., 9-10.
9Ibid., 11.
10Ibid., 284.
11Ibid., 279.
12Ibid., 278-279.
13Ibid., 8.
14Ibid., 9.
of the Grammar, but farther on he notes that they are not the same since it is possible to apprehend without understanding. That John, for example, is Joan's brother's wife's sister's uncle may be apprehended without being understood. Understanding then means for Newman a clear, penetrating grasp, while apprehension has a wider significance, ranging from a mere superficial knowledge of words to a deeper understanding of the ideas which these words express, and deeper still to a personal appreciation of the reality which these ideas attempt to penetrate.

There are two types of apprehension, real and notional. Real apprehension is knowledge of the concrete and individual. Apprehension is real when the terms of the apprehended proposition stand "for things simply external to us, brought home to us through the experiences and informations we have of them." Real apprehension is the result of vivid experience or memory or imaginative communication of lived experience. Real apprehension stirs our will and emotions as well as our reason and makes our judgments peculiarly intense and personal.

Notional apprehension, on the other hand, is knowledge about the general and abstract. Apprehension is notional when the terms of the apprehended proposition "stand for certain ideas existing in our own minds, and for nothing

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15 Ibid., 8.
16 Ibid., 19.
17 Ibid., 9.
18 Ibid., 12, 28-29.
outside of them." In notional apprehension one grasps reality as if it were abstract, omitting what is concrete and individual in it. A notional idea is an abstract idea, a universal, or a general concept. The kind of apprehension one has varies with each individual. What is a real apprehension for one man may be only a notional apprehension for another.

Newman does not contrast real and notional apprehension with each other with the result that notional apprehension becomes a weak, imperfect real apprehension. Each has its task, its perfection, and its limitation. "To apprehend notionally is to have breadth of mind, but to be shallow; to apprehend really is to be deep, but to be narrow-minded . . . . Without the apprehension of notions, we should forever pace round one small circle of knowledge; without a firm hold upon things, we shall waste ourselves in vague speculations." Real apprehension, however, is "the scope and end and the test of notional." It is the end of notional apprehension because men commonly try to realize and appreciate more deeply their ideas; it is the test of notional apprehension because our ideas are invalid without a correspondence to the real world of things.

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19Ibid., 9.
20Ibid., 10.
21Ibid., 34.
22Ibid.
ASSENT

Assent in its various aspects is the subject of the Grammar and its most important single term. Yet nowhere does Newman offer a complete definition of assent. Rather he gives many incomplete descriptions from which a general definition can be gathered.

Assent can be defined as the unconditional acceptance of a proposition as true, as adherence to a proposition without reserve or doubt. Assent is unconditional precisely because its object is truth, whether this be recognized implicitly or explicitly. Two conclusions immediately follow from this. First, since the object of assent is truth, apprehended truth is the condition under which assent is given. Vividness of apprehension and experience can affect the intensity of assent, but only accidentally; it is not essential to the act. Secondly, since there are no degrees of truth, there are in consequence no degrees of assent. Newman uses this as one of his arguments against John Locke and his doctrine of degrees of assent.

Assent differs from apprehension insofar as assent is one's intellectual reaction to an apprehension. Assent is the personal acceptance of what one has

23 Ibid., 8, 172, 259.
24 Ibid., 172.
25 Ibid., 188-189.
26 Ibid., 185.
27 Ibid., 174.
28 Ibid.
already apprehended as true. Apprehension then is a necessary concomitant of assent.29

Assent differs from an inference in two ways. First, inference is a necessary condition which always precedes assent.30 Secondly, assent is unconditional, while inference is conditional. Inference, which is here taken to mean primarily the conclusion of an inferential process or a conclusion from premisses,31 has two conditions. First, an inference of its very nature follows from and depends on its premisses, no matter what their number. An inference includes in its very object this dependence of its conclusion upon its premisses.32 Secondly, demonstrative or syllogistic inference in concrete reasoning reaches only probability; therefore its conclusion is only probable. "Inference is conditional, because a conclusion at least implies the assumption of premisses, and still more, because in concrete matter, on which I am engaged, demonstration is impossible."33

Assent, on the other hand, is unconditional; it is the acceptance of a proposition as true, and not as probable. Furthermore, the object of assent does not include a dependence upon premisses. For once a conclusion is recognized as true insofar as it proceeds from true premisses, it can be recognized

29Ibid., 8, 157.
30Ibid., 41.
31Ibid. Premiss is the second spelling. It is, however, the spelling which Newman uses. I will, therefore, follow him in this.
32Ibid., 40.
33Ibid., 8.
as true in itself. There is then no longer any need for premisses. The conclusion can be held as true even if the premisses are forgotten.²⁴

Assent, finally, as considered in the Grammar, is a free and responsible act²⁵ which recognized truth can command but not force. Such an act of assent is free because Newman deals with assent in concrete matter where there is no strict demonstration to compel it.

There are two divisions of assent. The first division is between the well-known real and notional assent. Real assent is assent given to a real apprehension, to the concrete, the experienced, the realized.²⁶ Notional assent is given to the abstract, the general, and the unexperienced.²⁷ Real assent, though not necessarily practical,²⁸ does excite the affections and stir the mind and will, for the concrete exercises a force which nothing abstract can

³⁴Ibid., 40. The following quotation from Father Francis Bacchus, though long, may help clarify the dependence of inference upon its premisses. "The teaching of the Grammar is that inference and assent are substantially different mental acts, and not, as many persons seem to regard them, merely different aspects of one and the same act. When a proposition is being inferred, the direct object before the mind is its relations to the premisses from which it is inferred. But when a proposition is assented to, the premisses disappear from view, just as scaffolding vanishes when a building is completed, and the proposition in itself becomes the direct object before the mind. It is true that acts of inference normally precede an act of assent and are a sine qua non condition of its being elicited; but they do not form part of the act itself." Bacchus, p. 114.


³⁶Ibid., 9, 38.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 82.
Real assents are personal to each one, depending on one's own experience. "They depend on personal experience; and the experience of one man is not the experience of another." Real assent forms the mind and character. It is the motive cause of greatness. "They (real assents) create, as the case may be, heroes and saints, great leaders, statesmen, preachers, and reformers, the pioneers of discovery in science, visionaries, fanatics, knight-errants, demagogues, and adventurers. They have given to the world men of one idea, of immense energy, of adamantine will, of revolutionary power."

Notional assent, on the other hand, does not stimulate the will and emotions nor lead to action. Notional assent closely resembles and is sometimes almost undistinguishable from the inferential conclusion, since the apprehension common to both is notional. There are various types of notional assent, ranging from mere passive and superficial assertion to speculation, the firm, conscious acceptance of abstract propositions as true. Newman does not necessarily disparage notional assent. Speculation, for example, is the firm adherence of the mind to mathematical truths, to the abstract laws of

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39 Ibid., 36.
40 Ibid., 83.
41 Ibid., 88.
42 Ibid., 39.
43 Profession, Credence, Opinion, Presumption, and Speculation.
44 Ibid., 42.
45 Ibid., 73.
sciences such as philosophy and theology. Furthermore, there are many truths, such as mysteries, "God is One in Three," to which one can give only a notional assent. Real assent, however, is the most perfect kind of assent according to Newman, since its exercise is in the concrete world of real things. On the other hand "When assents are exercised on notions, they tend to be mere assertions without any personal hold on them on the part of those who make them."

Assent is also divided into simple and complex assent. Simple assent, whether real or notional, is more or less unconscious, implicit, given without full advertence of the mind, without direct knowledge. Most of one's assents, especially his first ones, are merely expressions of one's personal likings, tastes, prejudices, motives, and principles as directed by nature. Simple assents are not necessarily permanent, but can be lost. As one grows older, for example, he begins to correct or change, after reflection and experience, many simple assents which were but prejudices. For this reason, religion demands more than a simple assent; it requires certitude which is complex assent, or at least a simple assent which can be converted into certitude when the occasion demands. Simple assent, finally, is called material certitude by

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 52, 124 ff.
49 Ibid., 40.
50 Ibid., 188, 194
51 Ibid., 220.
52 Ibid., 194.
53 Ibid., 220.
Newman, that is, the matter from which it is possible to evolve certitude. Complex or reflex assent is an assent to an assent, a conscious, deliberate assent to a simple assent, whether real or notional. Complex assent is always notional, since the predicate of its proposition is the abstract word true, or duty, or necessary. "That Ireland is an island is true" is a case in point. A second name for complex or reflex assent is conviction, and right conviction is certitude. Certitude therefore is a reflex act. Newman gives several descriptive definitions of certitude; he calls it "the perception of a truth with the perception that it is a truth, or the consciousness of knowing, as expressed in the phrase, 'I know that I know,' "the possession and enjoyment of truths," "a conviction of what is true," "an active recognition of propositions as true." Certitude when perfect unites the keenness of real assent and the persistence of reflex assent.

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54 Ibid., 211.
55 Ibid., 190, 194-195.
56 Ibid., 214.
57 Ibid., 195.
58 Ibid., 195-196, 221.
59 Ibid., 197.
60 Ibid., 228.
61 Ibid., 252.
62 Ibid., 345.
63 Ibid., 216.
The three conditions of certitude are first that it follow on investigation and proof, secondly that it be accompanied by a specific sense of intellectual satisfaction, and thirdly that it be irreversible or indefectible.64

One's certitudes, of course, are few; they are limited to various primary facts, to elementary points of knowledge, to the broad principles of science and history.65 Lastly, certitude according to Newman is often the result of a cumulation of arguments which are in themselves but probable.66 Here again the problem of truth in the concrete must be faced.

**INFERENCE**

Before passing on to an examination of inference, a brief orientation will clarify the place in the Grammar of various terms which have been explained thus far. First, Newman treats of propositions in their bearing on the concrete, that is, as they express things and experienced realities. The knowledge of such propositions is called real apprehension. The unconditional acceptance of or adherence to a proposition which is really apprehended is called real assent. Newman is primarily concerned with real assent in the Grammar, since, as he says, the assent involved in a living act of faith is either a real assent or a certitude, which in this case is a deliberate reflex notional assent on a previous real assent. There yet remains to be explained first the

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64Ibid., 197, 203 ff., 221, 229, 258.
65Ibid., 236, 239-240.
66Ibid., 293, 301.
inferential processes, and secondly the Illative Sense, the organon for conclud ing to truth in concrete, contingent matters.

Inference, in general, is divided into the inferential process of reasoning, the conclusion of this process, and the act of adhering conditionally to this conclusion. The inferential conclusion, as was noted before, is dependent on its premisses and this dependence is included in its object. 67 Inference, as the process of reasoning, when it is syllogistic or demonstrative, in concrete matters reaches only probability. 68 An inferential process of some sort, however, is a sine qua non condition of assent, 69 and the strength of its argumentation does have its influence on assent. 70 The normal state of inference is to apprehend propositions as notions, 71 and it is most perfect when it is exercised on notions. 72 The object of the inferential process when exercised on concrete matter is not truth, but rather verisimilitude or the truth-like. 73

Inference as a reasoning process is divided into natural, formal, and informal inference. Formal inference is verbal reasoning; 74 verbal reasoning in

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67 Ibid., 40
68 Ibid., 8.
69 Ibid., 41.
70 Ibid., 171.
72 Ibid., 40. Again, formal, rather than informal or natural, inference is referred to.
73 Ibid., 157, 259. Again, Newman refers to formal inference.
74 Newman opposes verbal reasoning to mental reasoning. Natural inference and informal inference are the two types of mental reasoning. Verbal reasoning is mental reasoning expressed as adequately as possible in words.
its scientific form is logic or syllogistic reasoning. Newman uses the term formal inference for verbal reasoning both in its scientific and non-scientific sense.

Verbal reasoning, although it has great utility, partly succeeds and partly fails in providing a test and common measure of reasoning, as it is meant to do. It fails first of all insofar as words cannot fully express the countless varieties and subtleties of human thought. Secondly, verbal and syllogistic reasoning both concern the abstract. In the abstract they can arrive at truth. Premises which are true in the abstract order, however, may

75 Ibid., 263-264: "Verbal reasoning, of whatever kind, as opposed to mental, is what I mean by inference, which differs from logic only inasmuch as logic is its scientific form. And it will be more convenient here to use the two words indiscriminately, for I shall say nothing about logic which does not in its substance also apply to inference." Cf. also p. 287: "I have assumed throughout this section that all verbal argumentation is ultimately syllogistic."

76 Ibid. A third name often given to but not wholly commensurate with formal inference is demonstration. Demonstration consists of a syllogism made up of two necessary premises which lead to a true conclusion, provided the reasoning is correct. Newman says a syllogism is a demonstration when its premises are granted. "For a syllogism is at least a demonstration, when the premises are granted." -- Ibid., 293. Cf. also Zeno, p. 76.

77 Ibid., 262, 271. Cf. also p. 285: "Every exercise of nature or of art is good in its place; and the uses of this logical inference are manifold. It is the great principle of order in our thinking; it reduces a chaos into harmony; it catalogues the accumulations of knowledge; it maps out for us the relations of its separate departments; it puts us in the way to correct its own mistakes. It enables the independent intellect of many, acting and re-acting on each other, to bring their collective force to bear upon one and the same subject-matter, or the same question."

78 Ibid., 261 ff.

79 Ibid., 264, 284.

80 Ibid., 279.
not be applicable in the concrete. Newman goes so far as to say that demonstration is impossible in the concrete order.\textsuperscript{81} The reason for this is twofold. First, the richness of the concrete and individual cannot be fully expressed in words, especially if they are abstract.\textsuperscript{82} Secondly, the concrete order is subject to many laws which often conflict with and modify each other.\textsuperscript{83} Finally, verbal syllogistic reasoning must assume its premisses.\textsuperscript{84} Each conclusion, each syllogism, depends upon previous premisses which it does not prove. This regress at length arrives at first premisses or first principles which are not admitted by all men and which are outside the province of logic and syllogisms since they cannot be proved.\textsuperscript{85}

The result, according to Newman, is that formal inference, when employed on matters of fact, can conclude to probabilities only, because, first of all, its conclusions are abstract, not concrete, and secondly, because its premisses are assumed, not proved. Formal inference, therefore, of itself does

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 265, 267.

\textsuperscript{83} Newman, Apologia, p. 168: "There is great difference between a conclusion in the abstract and a conclusion in the concrete, and . . . a conclusion may be modified in fact by a conclusion from some opposite principle."

\textsuperscript{84} Newman, Grammar, p. 269.

\textsuperscript{85} Newman of course holds that there are self-evident first principles (cf. p. 270). Newman uses the word \textit{assume} in the sense of not being demonstrable. Certain self-evident first principles are not demonstrable in any order. The premisses of a syllogism, however, are not demonstrable insofar as their demonstration would require a regress which tends to go back to self-evident first principles.
What is yet needed is a method of reasoning more adapted to the multiform variety of the concrete. Newman lists two such processes, one of which he calls natural inference, the other informal inference. Natural inference is the most ordinary mode of human reasoning. This method of reasoning proceeds not from proposition to proposition, but from things to things, from concrete facts to concrete facts. It usually shows itself as a simple act, not as a process, as if there were no medium coming between antecedent and consequent. The transition involved is almost spontaneous and is more or less unconscious and implicit. The perfection and precision of this natural reasoning varies with the person. "When it is characterized by precision, subtlety, promptitude, and truth, it is of course a gift and a rarity; in ordinary minds it is

86 Ibid., 268, 278, 279, 284. Newman says on p. 278: "As I have already said, arguments about the abstract cannot handle and determine the concrete. They may approximate to a proof, but they only reach the probable, because they cannot reach the particular."

87 Ibid., 259-260, 330-331.

88 Ibid., 330.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid., 332. Cf. also: "The term 'unconscious' does not convey exactly the same meaning as it does when used of the subconscious in modern psychology, but implies the spontaneity of activity with which our reflection has not (or not yet) occupied itself. A consequence is that the object thus spontaneously grasped will not yield up all its riches of information immediately."—Boekraad, p. 147.

91 Ibid., 331.

92 Ibid., 338-339, 341-342.
it is biassed and degraded by prejudice, passion, and self-interest; but still, after all, this divination comes by nature, and belongs to all of us in a measure, to women more than to me, hitting or missing, as the case may be, but with a success on the whole sufficient to show that there is a method in it, thought it be implicit." Examples of this natural reasoning are found in the weather predictions of the simple farmer and the diagnosis of the physician, both of whom often cannot assign explicit reasons for their conclusions. Newman calls natural inference instinctive, but he means by instinct in this case not a natural sense faculty, but an almost spontaneous perception of facts without assignable inferential media.

The second mode of concrete reasoning is informal inference. This method, according to Newman, is the most proper way to truth in the concrete. Informal inference consists in rising to a conclusion from a cumulation of probabilities which are independent of each other and which result from the nature and circumstances of the particular case in question. The mind in such cases is swayed by a mass of details, a body of proof, but is unequal to the complex

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93 Ibid. 331.

94 Ibid., 332.

95 Ibid., 333-334. Cf. also: "There are two things then, which caused Newman to choose and justify the use of the word instinct; first a certain spontaneity of our acts, which we perform naturally and not according to some artificial arrangement or rule, and secondly, the fact that these acts are concerned with things, and so imply realization."—Boekraad, p. 143.

96 Ibid., 288.

97 Ibid.
analysis of this proof. The mind, however, in viewing this cumulation of probabilities per modum unius is able, depending on its (the mind's) perfection, to discern the limit, the conclusion, toward which the probabilities converge. The mind then judges that the only sufficient reason for such a convergence is that the conclusion indicated is true.

Informal inference is not assent; it is, like all inference, conditional, insofar, at least, as its conclusion is dependent on its premisses. Informal inference differs from natural inference, which also is a means to truth in concrete matters, primarily by the fact that informal inference is recognized as a process. Informal inference consists of several acts, while natural inference is a simple, implicit, immediate passage from antecedents to conclusion. Moreover, the element of consciousness and explicitness is greater in informal inference than in natural inference. The description of informal inference given in this section is quite brief since a more detailed analysis

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98 Ibid., 292, 301.
99 Ibid., 288, 321, 327.
100 Ibid., 301, 317 ff., 321, 327.
101 Ibid., 293.
102 Boekraad, p. 113: "The difference between the three kinds of inferences may be summarized thus. In formal inference the process of reasoning which leads up to the conclusion is explicit or conscious. In natural inference it is implicit or unconscious. In informal inference it is partly the one and partly the other." Boekraad says of informal inference: "There are therefore two constituent parts of the process, one which can be formulated in a clear way according to all the requirements of sound logic, the other beyond that sphere, too subtle and too personal to be embodied in a definite formula: both have their part to play."—Boekraad, p. 47.
will be offered in chapter three.

THE ILLATIVE SENSE

The last term to be explained is Newman's famous Illative Sense. The Illative Sense is the mind proceeding to truth by way of either natural or informal inference. It is that function of the mind by which it arrives at and discerns truth in concrete matters. Newman calls the Illative Sense the power of judging and concluding in its perfection. He compares it with Aristotle's *phronesis* except that *phronesis* is limited to matters of conduct, while the Illative Sense operates in all concrete matters. The Illative Sense uses the various inferential processes as instruments and reaches conclusions above and beyond them.

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104 Ibid., 353-354. J. F. Cronin says that the Illative Sense is a combination of Aristotle's *phronesis* and *nous*. Newman, in the *Grammar*, at least, never mentions the latter term. "This faculty is clearly a fusion of Aristotle's *nous*, or Intelligence and the *phronesis*, or Prudence . . . . Aristotle says that Science (episteme) or the use of logic, cannot attain to the knowledge of first principles. This is the function of the Intelligence (*nous*) which intuitively grasps these truths. At the other end of the chain logic can not attain concrete facts, the ultimate particular things. To attain these latter is a function of Prudence (*phronesis*)."--John Francis Cronin, *Cardinal Newman: His Theory of Knowledge* (Washington, 1935), p. 27.
105 Ibid., 317, 354. Cf. also Gordon Harper, *Cardinal Newman and William Froude* (Baltimore, 1933), p. 203: "There is a faculty in the mind which I think I have called the inductive sense, which, when properly cultivated and used answers to Aristotle's *phronesis*, its province being, not virtue, but the 'inquisitio veri', which decides for us, beyond any technical rules, when, how, etc. to pass from inference to assent, and when and under what circumstances, etc., etc. not."
106 Ibid., 316.
Certain critics\textsuperscript{107} relegate the Illative Sense to the order of sensation seemingly because Newman uses the word sense. Newman, however, uses this term in the same way as one would say "good sense," or "common sense," or "a sense of beauty or justice."\textsuperscript{108} The Illative Sense is in every way an intellectual function, as will be seen more in detail in the following chapters.

\textsuperscript{107}D'Arcy, p. 151: "Our knowledge of the external world, of other persons, of causality, cannot be made evident by thought, but is based on some instinct which it is a waste of time to try to criticise. For the same reason he (Newman) holds that even the most severe deductive proofs end only in the probable; and so he claims that reasoning must always be completed by a new factor if it is to pass from the probable to the certain. It is clear that a great strain is put upon this illative sense if it has to do so much . . . . To make the valuable contribution contained in all this acceptable it is necessary first of all to restore the primacy of the intellect . . . ." Father D'Arcy seemingly makes no distinction between deductive proofs in the abstract, and as applied in the concrete. Cf. also T. Harper, p. 545., where the Illative Sense is called a "blind instinct."

\textsuperscript{108}Newman, Grammar, p. 345.
CHAPTER III

THE CONCLUSION OF THE
ILLATIVE SENSE

How does man arrive at truth? At certitude? These important and often baffling questions have for centuries stirred inquiring minds anxious for a definite, absolute answer. Many solutions have been attempted, some resulting in doctrines of innate ideas or special illuminations, others in a sceptical or relativistic denial of any truth to be attained at all.

How does man arrive at truth? This question exercised throughout a lifetime the powerful mind of John Henry Newman. Newman, however, in perhaps his greatest work, the Grammar of Assent, does not concern himself with abstract truth, which, he holds, can in most cases be discovered through a process of formal inference or logical syllogistic deduction. Newman's problem in the Grammar lies rather in determining how the mind attains truth in the concrete order where formal inference is either inadequate or wholly wanting. The solution of this problem is important, for through it alone can Newman justify the act of assent as an unconditional adherence to a proposition as true. Newman's answer lies in the operation of the Illative Sense, that is, in the power of the mind to judge correctly in concrete matters.

Because this thesis is studying the relation of the Illative Sense to the act of assent, it is first necessary to show how the mind with its illative
power reaches truth which is the basis of assent. The main concern of this third chapter, therefore, is the conclusion of the Illative Sense: why and how and under what circumstances this conclusion to truth is made. For this reason the insufficient bases of assent and the operation of the Illative Sense prior to concluding will be rather briefly treated.

Truth is the object of assent, the condition under which assent is given. This is a theme which Newman repeats throughout the Grammar. Every human being, however, has countless assents which seem true and rational enough, but which cannot be demonstrated. Moreover, these assents are not based on perceptual evidence, such as "I see you" or "I hear the music." Finally, one would have difficulty accounting fully for these firm affirmations of the mind. Are these assents valid? They may be if there is at least one way to truth other than demonstration and formal inference. Newman holds first that there is such a way to truth, and secondly that in concrete matters formal inference is inadequate.

Formal inference, which usually proceeds by way of syllogisms, is the way to truth in the abstract, but not in the concrete. The reason as noted in

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1 Newman calls opinion which is a notional assent "an assent to a proposition, not as true, but as probably true"—Ibid., 58. This definition of opinion which is repeated on p. 178 of the Grammar would seem either to confuse opinion with inference or to deny that truth is the object of assent. However, Newman's mind seems to be that the assent is given, not to a probability as such, but to the fact that such and such a proposition is probable is true.

2 Ibid., 172, 259.

3 Ibid., 268, 278, 279, 284.
chapter two is threefold. 4 First, formal inference, because it makes use of words, cannot fully express the intricate, subtle, and often implicit workings of the human mind. 5 Secondly, formal inference does not prove, but assumes, its premisses. 6 Thirdly, formal inference concludes only to probability in the concrete, since the richness and variety of the concrete and individual cannot be wholly expressed in words, especially if they are abstract, and since the concrete order is subject to many laws which often negate or modify each other. 7 For these reasons, since it does not conduct to truth, formal inference is not the sufficient cause of assent in concrete matters.

Newman does not reject formal inference; rather he moves away from it. The reason for this withdrawal from formal inference and syllogistic reasoning is found in their limitation. The fact that formal inference is greatly restricted in its application is important for an appreciation of Newman's doctrine of concrete reasoning or informal inference. Newman's position can be summarized into three points. First, reason orders one to assent only when truth or absolute proof has been reached. 8 Secondly, a perfectly logical demonstration can command assent. Formal inference, therefore, when it is able to

4Cf. pp. 24-25 in chapter two of this thesis.
6Ibid., 269.
7Ibid., 265, 267, 289
8Ibid., 345.
arrive at truth in the abstract, can command assent. 9 Thirdly, except in certain limited cases, there is no perfect logical demonstration. "I consider there is no such thing as a perfect logical demonstration; there is always a margin of objection even in Mathematics, except in the case of short proofs, as the propositions of Euclid." 10 

Two conclusions follow from these three points. The first conclusion is that one cannot devise a science of reasoning, which, if followed, is sufficient to compel assent in concrete matters. 11 Logic and syllogistic reasoning are not able to determine every truth; their range is in fact small. 12 It is rather "the mind that reasons, and that controls its own reasonings, not any technical apparatus of words and propositions." 13 The mind with its illative power goes so far as to reach conclusions which are above and beyond its premisses.

The second conclusion is that the range of concrete matter and concrete reasoning is very large. Newman extends the province of concrete matter and concrete reasoning to investigations in chemistry, law, morals, religion, experimental science, literary criticism, historical research, theology, and the

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9 Ibid., 170. "I allow then as much as this, that, when an argument is in itself and by itself conclusive of a truth, it has by a law of our nature the same command over our assent, or rather the truth which it has reached has the same command, as our senses have."


12 Ibid., 358.

13 Ibid., 353.
greater part of mathematics. He says of the operation of the Illative Sense that "it is often called the 'judicium prudentis viri,' a standard of certitude which olds good in all concrete matter, not only in those cases of practice and duty, in which we are more familiar with it, but in questions of truth and falsehood generally, or in what are called 'speculative' questions, and that, not indeed to the exclusion, but as the supplement of logic." In short, Newman includes almost the whole of thought and reasoning within the orbit of concrete matter, with the result that hardly any of one's reasoning proceeds by way of formal inference and demonstration.

Before proceeding from formal inference to the valid way to truth in concrete matters, one other insufficient basis of assent should be considered. This second inadequate basis of assent is vividness of apprehension. Assents, of course, can be made without sufficient reason, and vividness of apprehension is a common trap for assent in concrete matter. But the strength and clarity of a mental apprehension is no argument for the reality of the object which the impression represents. Newman cites Hume and his school, with their rejection of miracles, as an example of this fallacy. These philosophers were so strongly impressed by the uniformity of nature that they judged it to be inviolable. Newman does not deny the influence of a vivid real apprehension over one's acts

14 Ibid., 359.
15 Ibid., 317.
16 Ibid., 80 ff., 185.
17 Ibid., 81.
of assent. This influx, however, is accidental, the true effect of a strong real apprehension being "not to create assent, but to intensify it."18

Since formal inference and vividness of apprehension are insufficient to cause assent because they do not reach truth in concrete, contingent matters, the question as to what is the adequate basis of assent must be asked. Certainly, truth is the only adequate basis, but how is truth come by? Newman solves this problem with his Illative Sense which proceeds to truth primarily by means of informal inference.19

Let it be noted that informal inference is but a method used by the mind with its illative power, and since it is inference, it too is conditioned just as formal inference is. An inference may be conditioned for two reasons. First, the conclusion of any inference, formal, informal, or natural, is dependent on its premisses, and this dependence is necessarily included in the conclusion. This is true of inference even when the mind in using it arrives at truth.20 The conclusion may be true; but it is held to be true only insofar as it proceeds from its premisses. That is, it is not as yet held as true in itself (as in the act of assent); it is as yet conditioned by its premisses. Secondly, in concrete matter, formal inference does not reach truth, but only probability. This however, does not hold true of informal inference which is not thus conditioned, but which may lead to truth in the concrete. Finally,

18Ibid., 82.

19This is not to exclude natural inference as a method for attaining truth in the concrete. Informal inference is but a prolongation or extension of natural inference which is less explicit and less conscious.

20Ibid., 203.
informal inference does not supercede logic and formal inference; it merely carries them into the concrete. How this is done will be shown throughout this third chapter.

How does the Illative Sense proceed in its use of informal inference? The Illative Sense begins the quest for truth with a problem to be solved. In the investigation of this problem, it must first judge which principles are to be used, and which are to be left aside, which principles may be assumed, and which must be proved, which must be avoided as false and so forth.21 Newman treats of these first principles on which the Illative Sense must pass judgment in his discussion of presumption, a type of notional assent. Presumption is in fact assent to first principles.22

Newman defines a first principle as "the propositions with which we start in reasoning on any given subject-matter."23 The existence, for example, of an external world, of conscience, of causality, of order in the universe, of right and wrong, are instances which Newman gives of first principles. These first principles are notional because they are expressed in general, abstract propositions such as "there is a right and wrong" or "a world external to myself exists." They do, however, have their origin in an experience or a multi-

21Ibid., 371, 375-376.
22Ibid., 60.
23Ibid. Cf. also John Henry Newman, Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England (London, 1918), p. 284: "I just now said that these First Principles, being a man's elementary points of thinking, and the ideas which he has prior to other ideas, might be considered as almost part of his mind or moral being itself."
tude of experiences. Newman divides first principles into two types, those "which resolve themselves into the conditions of human nature," which proceed either from nature or are according to the natural use of one's faculties, and those which have their beginning in "the sentiments of the age, country, religion, social habits and ideas." That there is a right and wrong is an example of the former, that Jesuits are sly and crafty of the latter, at least, for many Protestants. As can be seen, those first principles which result from culture and environment account to a great degree for the diversity of opinion and thought among men.

After its choice of first principles, the Illative Sense must proceed to truth through a process of reasoning or inference. This conquest of truth is most important for this thesis since it indicates the primary and directly proximate relation of the Illative Sense to assent. By means of this advance to truth, the conditionality which hampers formal inference is done away with, for when truth is found probability disappears, and furthermore, there is no longer any need of a dependence upon premisses. The operation of the Illative Sense in this process may be conveniently divided into three parts. First, the Illative Sense cumulates a number of probable arguments. Secondly, it knows these probable arguments not one by one, but as a whole. Thirdly, the Illative Sense discerns the legitimate conclusion of these probabilities.

24 Cf. Newman, Present Position, pp. 283-284, where Newman seems to equate first principles with real apprehension and real assent. Although first principles are notional in the Grammar, Newman does not deny the powerful influence of real apprehension and real assent in one's thought and action.


26 Ibid.
Truth is complex and many-sided, depending for its resolution on the combination of a number of varied, scattered evidences. Consequently, the approach to truth partakes of this complexity. If one were to attempt the conversion of a Protestant with the simple, fleshless syllogism, "Protestants are bound in conscience to join the Catholic Church; but you are a Protestant; therefore . . .," he would soon realize the futility of such an unrealistic method. Truth, at least in concrete, contingent circumstances, is not attained by facile reasoning and bald syllogisms. The number of possible distinctions which the beleaguered Protestant could make as regards both major and minor are almost countless. Newman lists some of the more prominent ones in the Grammar.27

The method used by the mind or Illative Sense in resolving such an argument as "Protestants are bound to join the Catholic Church" is far more subtle and delicate than formal inference or any syllogism. Newman, as has been seen, calls this method informal inference. The special characteristic of informal inference is to rise to truth and assent from a cumulation of probabilities,28 that is, from a multitude of little indications, all of which point toward an answer, although none of them taken singly, nor all of them together, is alone strong enough to force a certain conclusion.

Newman follows and improves on the teaching of two theologians in this matter of accumulating probabilities; the first is Bishop Butler, an Anglican

27 Ibid., 289-290
28 Ibid., 288. "It is the cumulation of probabilities, independent of each other, arising out of the nature and circumstances of the particular case which is under review; probabilities too fine to avail separately, too subtle and circuitous to be convertible into syllogisms, too numerous and various for such conversion, even were they convertible."
divine, the second a Catholic theologian named Amort. Bishop Butler taught that a number of probable evidences could lead to a high probability, to a probability sufficient to be called a practical certitude and compelling enough to justify action. Newman agrees with Butler insofar as he also begins with a multitude of probable evidences; however, because he holds that under certain conditions such an accumulation of probable arguments can lead, not only to high probability, but to truth and the consequent mental acts of assent and certitude.

Amort, on the other hand, held that a proof sufficient for assent and certitude could be constructed from one argument of greater probability. In this way, he attempted to prove the claims of Catholicism over Protestantism. Newman does not explicitly deny this position, but requires rather a number of probable arguments, not just one of greater probability.

This accumulation of probabilities from which the Illative Sense rises to truth and assent is not a mere congeries of probabilities, as Father Martin D'Arcy seems to think. A congeries of probable evidences is a number of probable evidences or arguments which are termed probable derive this name from their relation to the conclusion which the Illative Sense ultimately reaches. They are not of necessity probable insofar as there is some doubt as to their existence or intrinsic content. Each probable evidence may be a fact in itself.

29 Evidences or arguments which are termed probable derive this name from their relation to the conclusion which the Illative Sense ultimately reaches. They are not of necessity probable insofar as there is some doubt as to their existence or intrinsic content. Each probable evidence may be a fact in itself.


31 Newman, Grammar, p. 111.

32 D'Arcy, p. 201. "I do not believe that the probabilities as such can ever make certitude, whereas there seems to be no doubt that evidence can so accumulate and cohere together as to reveal inevitably a certain pattern and meaning." Father D'Arcy's "corrective" position seems to be almost the same as Newman's, although phrased in different terms.
bable evidences considered together, taken as a group. No amount of evidence of this sort, however, can of itself lead to truth and assent. Newman would fully agree with this; he makes a distinction in the *Apologia* which indicates support. "Moreover, that as there were probabilities which sufficed for certitude, so there were other probabilities which were legitimately adapted to create opinion." Newman's teaching is, not that probable arguments are of themselves ever sufficient for truth, but that a number of probable arguments plus a third element, that is, a mind able to discern the connection and inter-relationships and direction of these evidences and recognize their convergence to one point, can lead one to truth.

A further indication of this line of reasoning is given in Newman's treatment of informal inference in the *Grammar*. In this section, Newman quotes Bishop Butler as saying that probable proofs when added together not only increase the evidence but multiply it. If truth were to be the result of probabilities as such, then four probable proofs would be only four times as probable as one. The increase would be purely arithmetical and on the level of addition. The fact, however, that the evidence is multiplied indicates that there is present an active intelligence which is able to analyze and interpret its evidence. This intelligence or *Illative Sense* realizes that "as the evi-

33 Newman, *Apologia*, p. 21. Cloudy weather is evidence that rain will probably come. The statement that rain will come, however, is but an opinion, unless one can actually foretell the future.


dence increases it becomes more and more difficult to explain otherwise than by
the truth of the conclusion. And certitude is reached when the evidence has
increased to such a point that no alternative explanation seems possible. 36

The Illative Sense, Newman says, knows this accumulation of probable argu-
ments, not one by one, but in a single glance, "by a mental comprehension of
the whole case." 37 In this Newman wishes to emphasize the spontaneity and fa-
cility of action of the Illative Sense which in much of its reasoning almost
takes itself from out the order of time. In the normal process of thought, one
moves rapidly from considerations to conclusion. The mind does not have nor
take the time to examine each evidence explicitly and individually. One grasps,
as it were, "the full tale of premisses and the conclusion per modum unius."38

Finally, the Illative Sense discerns the legitimate conclusion towards
which the probable evidence points. This is what Newman means by saying that
the Illative Sense discerns the convergence of the probabilities. This dis-
cernment of a conclusion is preceded by a dialectic in which the Illative Sense
examines and weighs its evidence. In this process of reasoning, the Illative
Sense overcomes objections, neutralizes adverse theories, gradually clears up
difficulties, discovers new correlations, and finally comes to a conclusion.39

Newman describes this act of concluding in many places. He says that the

38 Ibid., 301.
39 Ibid., 321.
Illative Sense in grasping and comprehending the premises, discerns their upshot,\textsuperscript{10} or perceives the legitimate conclusion in and through the premises,\textsuperscript{11} or reaches a conclusion above and beyond the probable evidence,\textsuperscript{12} or recognizes that the conclusion indicated is not only probable but true,\textsuperscript{13} or determines the limit of converging probabilities and the reasons sufficient for a proof.\textsuperscript{14}

The conclusion, therefore, is a result not only of the available evidence, but also of the mind or Illative Sense which analyzes and interprets that evidence and is led to look beyond it to a point which the evidence can indicate but which it of itself cannot logically reach. The evidence presents a multitude of indications which converge toward one answer or conclusion, although none of these probable evidences alone, nor all of them together, can force the conclusion. Father D'Arcy, in his attempt to correct Newman, actually ends up by unwittingly stating the same teaching. "there seems to be no doubt that evidence can so accumulate and cohere together as to reveal inevitably a certain pattern and meaning."\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid., 291.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., 301.
\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., 316.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 320.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 360.
\textsuperscript{15}D'Arcy, p. 201. Father D'Arcy's position does agree with Newman's if this coherence of evidence is the result of the healthy action of the mind. If the coherence, however, results from the evidence alone, then the two positions differ.
The proof in such an inference from an accumulation of probable evidences is indirect. The evidence supplied, since it is made up of probabilities, does not logically touch the conclusion, which is rather above and beyond the evidence. "The conclusion," therefore, "in a real or concrete question is foreseen and predicted rather than actually attained; foreseen in the number and direction of accumulated premises, which all converge to it, and as the result of their combination, approach it more nearly than any assignable difference, yet do not touch it logically (though only not touching it,) on account of the nature of its subject-matter, and the delicate and implicit character of at least part of the reasonings on which it depends." 46

Newman compares this indirectness of proof with the lemma with which Newton begins his Principia. 47 A regular polygon, he says, which is inscribed within a circle, if its sides are continually diminished, tends to become that circle, although it vanishes before there is a perfect coincidence. The tendency therefore of this polygon never extends beyond the stage of tendency. So too the probable evidences converge or tend toward a conclusion, but never of themselves pass beyond this tendency.

Because the proof in such cases is indirect, the concluding judgment must also be indirect and in a sense, negative. The Illative Sense does not directly judge the conclusion to be true, but says rather that it cannot be otherwise. "We are considered to feel, rather than to see, its cogency; and we decide, not that the conclusion must be, but that it cannot be otherwise. We say, that we

46 Newman, Grammar, p. 321. The underlined words are mine.
47 Ibid., 320.
do not see our way to doubt it, that it is impossible to doubt, that we are bound to believe it, that we should be idiots, if we did not believe.\textsuperscript{148} Newman elsewhere says that the Illative Sense recognizes that the conclusion is inevitable, that it is as good as proved, that it is as undeniable as if it were proved, that one would act irrationally if he were not to accept the conclusion as proved.\textsuperscript{149}

The principle involved in such an indirect judgment seems to involve the principle of sufficient reason. Thus the only sufficient reason for the convergence of probable arguments is that the conclusion which they indicate is objectively true. The convergence which the Illative Sense recognizes would be inexplicable unless the conclusion toward which the convergence points was the legitimate limit of the process.

To conclude from this indirectness of judgment, however, that the assent or certitude given to the conclusion of an informal inference is of the purely practical order is invalid. Such is not Newman's mind.\textsuperscript{50} The term \textit{practical certitude} is usually used to designate a probability sufficient for action. Newman does not mean this since the assent with which one accepts the conclusion of an accumulation of converging probabilities is absolute, and given, at least indirectly, to truth. To attach this false interpretation to Newman's thought destroys the whole \textit{ratio} of his work on assent, since it forces him to hold

\textsuperscript{148}\textit{Ibid.}, 317.

\textsuperscript{149}\textit{Ibid.}, 321, 323.

\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Ibid.}, 325-326. Cf. also Boekraad, p. 287.
almost the same position as John Locke, Bishop Butler, and the rationalists. 51

Newman uses the word moral to describe the evidence and assent or certitude given to the conclusion of an informal inference. The evidence presented is moral evidence. One has moral certitude. Newman dislikes the term moral because of its vagueness, although he himself uses the word in a vague and confusing manner. Newman's definition of moral, however, does not seem to accord with the one which Father Harper gives it in his interpretation of the grammar. Harper says the evidence and the consequent assent and certitude are moral because they are based on human testimony, "upon the free-will of man, who can lie or speak the truth, as he pleases." 52

Newman does rely upon human testimony, on the witness of others, but his use of the term moral relates rather to the person who is investigating and attempting a conclusion. The evidence is not absolute; it cannot compel or coerce assent. The person, therefore, with the best use of his Illative Sense, must bridge the gap between evidence and conclusion before he can give assent. In such a process, as shall be seen later, the person acts under a sense of duty and in accordance with conscience. Newman, then, uses the term moral because duty and conscience are involved.

Those who object to Newman's teaching on informal inference and converging probabilities on the grounds that they are illogical and un-metaphysical must ultimately face Newman's own personal experience. In the Apologia where he

51 Cf. pp. 5-8 in chapter one of this thesis.

describes his gradual conversion to Catholicism, Newman makes it clear that it
was not syllogisms or formal inference which led him on. He constantly re-
iterates in spirit if not in words the maxim of St. Ambrose: Non in dialectica
complacuit Deo salvum facere populum suum. It is not God's pleasure to bring
His people to salvation through arguments, through syllogisms, through scienti-
fic evidences. "For myself, it was not logic that carried me on; as well might
one say that the quicksilver in the barometer changes the weather. It is the
concrete being that reasons; pass a number of years, and I find my mind in a
new place; how? the whole man moves; paper logic is but the record of it. All
the logic in the world would not have made me move faster towards Rome than I
did . . . . Great acts take time."53

Further on in the Apologia, Newman explicitly states the grounds of his
belief. In 1843 and 1844, he says that he "believed in a God on a ground of
probability, that I believed in Christianity on a probability, and that I be-
lieved in Catholicism on a probability, and that these three grounds of proba-
bility, distinct from each other of course in subject matter, were still all of
them one and the same in nature of proof, as being probabilities."54 These

53 Newman, Apologia, pp. 169-170. Cf. also Grammar, pp. 94-95: "Life is not
long enough for a religion of inferences; we shall never have done beginning, if
we determine to begin with proof. We shall ever be laying our foundations . . .
Life is for action. If we insist on proofs for every thing, we shall never
come to action: to act you must assume, and that assumption is faith." Newman
originally wrote these words in 1841. In introducing them, he implies that the
thought and expression contained therein are not necessarily the same on all
points as his thought in 1870. Cf. pp. 91-92

54 Ibid., 199. Cf. also following page where Newman says: "But, let it be
observed, that I am stating a matter of fact, not defending it; and if any Ca-
tholic says in consequence that I have been converted in a wrong way, I can not
help that now,"
probabilities were however of a special kind; they were cumulative, leading to a conclusion higher than the logical evidence. Newman gives examples of these evidences for Christianity and Catholicism in the tenth chapter of the Grammar where he develops his personal reasons for belief. First, he says, the history of the Jewish people, especially their history after the Crucifixion, is inexplicable unless Christianity has come as a fulfillment of the Old Law. Secondly, the heroic sufferings and deaths of the many Christian martyrs of primitive times bear overwhelming witness to the divinity of the Christian Church.

The Illative Sense, therefore, rises from a cumulation of probable evidences to a true conclusion. This is verified, Newman says, both in his own and in others' experience. But how is one to know whether or not he has judged correctly? How is one to know whether or not he has arrived at truth? Newman's answer is at first startling and seems to reveal an overly subjective element in his thought. He says that one must "confess that there is no ultimate test of truth besides the testimony born (sic) to truth by the mind itself."55 Later he writes that "in no class of concrete reasonings, whether in experimental science, historical research, or theology, is there any ultimate test of truth and error in our inferences besides the trustworthiness of the Illative Sense."56 It might be argued at this point that Newman neglects objective evidence, that he must ultimately assert that truth is relative for each one or, at the other extreme, bestow the gift of infallibility on the human

56 Ibid., 359.
If the latter is true, how is error and falsehood possible?

Such objections, however, falsify Newman's position. That Newman does not deny objective evidence or assert that truth is relative will be consequently shown. Neither does he consider the Illative Sense to be infallible. What he does affirm is that the final judgment on the value of objective evidence lies with each individual Illative Sense. Objective, external evidence is the fundamental test and criterion for truth, which is the adequation of mind to thing or object. Newman would agree to this, but would also assert that this criterion of objectivity must be used by the individual mind. It is the Illative Sense, and not an external science of reasoning, that recognizes truth, the correspondence between thing and concept, and commands assent.

Newman's point, which is much like that made by St. Thomas, is that the mind with its illative power knows that its object is truth, and, furthermore, knows when it has found truth. Otherwise the Illative Sense could neither conclude nor assent. The Illative Sense can, of course, be wrong and fall into error, but even in such erroneous judgments the mind bears witness to the truth, to what it mistakenly judges to be true. If the test of truth were not ultimately subjective, error would be impossible. It is because the Illative Sense can be wrong in its judgment that one is able to consider true what is in fact

59 Ibid., 224-227.
60 Ibid., 312, 344-345, 353, 358.
false.  

Here, however, the question arises why everyone does not arrive at the same truth or conclude the same way. For, if truth is objective, and the Illative Sense knows when it has arrived at truth, how is divergence in thought and opinion possible? In answer to these difficulties, something of the circumstances or conditions under which the conclusion to truth is made must be given. Newman's position is that the Illative Sense in its operation and quest for truth is conditioned by the man as he is in the concrete.

Newman strongly insists on this personal element in reasoning. He freely admits the two men will often judge differently and come to opposite conclusions. Hence the cumulation of probabilities in number and in value varies according to the particular intellect involved. Again, the power to discern the limit of convergence differs. Where one man might conclude to truth, a second will conclude to high probability. Even the particular field or area in which the Illative Sense excels varies from man to man. One man has a peculiar talent for mathematics, another for history, a third for character analysis. "No one would for a moment expect that because Newton and Napoleon both had a genius for ratiocination, that, in consequence, Napoleon could have generalized the principle of gravitation, or Newton have seen how to concentrate a hundred thousand men at Austerlitz. The ratiocinative faculty, then, as found in indi-

61 Flanagan, p. 106.


63 Ibid., 302.

64 Ibid., 293.
viduals, is not a general instrument of knowledge, but has its province, or is what may be called departmental."65

Finally, men differ not only in regard to conclusions reached, but also in regard to first principles, those basic positions with which one begins his reasoning at any given time.66 The result is, as Newman says, that each man looks at the world in his own way.67 What then happens to the objectivity of truth, especially since the Illative Sense is its ultimate test? Again is not the Illative Sense too subjective?

Newman shows in many places in the Grammar that the Illative Sense of each person is influenced not only by his intellectual perfection, but also by his moral perfection, freedom from prejudice, and so forth. Truth for Newman is objective and absolute. Even so, it assumes a secondary aspect of relativity from each one's intellectual and moral being into which it is taken. One does, of course, examine objective evidence when he comes to a conclusion or solution. But the influence and color, so to speak, of this evidence to a large degree depends on one's previous state of mind, on his character and intellectual skill.

The Illative Sense of the ordinary person is biased and degraded by passion and prejudice, by lack of training and discipline. Yet this illative

65Ibid., 339. Cf. also pp. 341-342.
66Ibid., 269.
67Ibid., 373. "The aspect under which we view things is often intensely personal; nay, even awfully so, considering that, from the nature of the case, it does not bring home its idiosyncrasy either to ourselves or to others. Each of us looks at the world in his own way, and does not know that perhaps it is characteristically his own."
power is capable of perfection. Practice, experience, and mental discipline fashion the mind so that its judgments become more unerring and more perfect. Lack of experience, on the other hand, is the reason for distrust of men who are theoreticians only. Who would consult a doctor or dentist who, perfect in theory, was lacking in experience? For these reasons, Newman insists that a special preparation of the mind is necessary for the fruitful operation of the Illative Sense.

But what can be said concerning moral difficulties, concerning passion, or prejudice, or self-interest? That moral faults can obstruct the attainment of truth is beyond doubt. For example, one will not recognize that the Catholic Church is the true Church of God because reform of life is difficult. Or, a young man will not recognize his true vocation because of a dislike of it.

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69 Ibid., 411-415. Newman lists the following as one way of effecting this special preparation of mind: "Instead of trusting logical sequence, we must trust persons, namely, those who by long acquaintance with their subject have a right to judge. And if we wish ourselves to share in their convictions and the grounds of them, we must follow their history, and learn as they have learned. We must take up their particular subject as they took it up, beginning at the beginning, give ourselves to it, depend on practice and experience more than on reasoning, and thus gain that mental insight into truth, whatever its subject-matter may be, which our masters have gained before us"—Ibid., 341-342.

70 John Henry Newman, "The World and Sin," Faith and Prejudice and Other Unpublished Sermons of Cardinal Newman (New York, 1956), p. 81: "The world is full of wrangling and debate, and not unreasonably, because when the heart is wrong, the reason goes wrong too, and when men corrupt themselves and lead bad lives, then they do not see the truth, but have to hunt after it, and this creates a great confusion." Cf. also a contemporary philosopher's opinion: "For, even if knowledge is autonomous, considered both in itself and in regard to what it presents, yet the capacity of knowing depends largely upon the general attitude of the person that knows. Defective general attitudes are very apt to close the intellectual eye and to darken its vision; the right attitude, on the contrary, confers sight"—Dietrich Von Hildebrand, "Catholicism and Unprejudiced Knowledge," The New Tower of Babel (New York, 1953), p. 132.
As to prejudice, Newman cites the case of the Dominicans, who, as he says, opposed the Copernican system in physics even as late as the latter part of the nineteenth century.71

Newman also indicates the contrast between Pascal and Montaigne. Montaigne was an arch-sceptic who took great delight in his scepticism. This attitude angered the more intense, truth-seeking Pascal and called forth from him a severe condemnation. Why do men like Pascal and Montaigne differ so vastly? Is truth then relative, depending on the personal, private view of each individual? Newman strongly opposes this relativism. His conclusion is "that truth there is, and attainable it is, but that its rays stream in upon us through the medium of our moral as well as our intellectual being; and that in consequence that perception of its first principles which is natural to us is enfeebled, obstructed, perverted, by allurements of sense and the supremacy of self, and, on the other hand, quickened by aspirations after the supernatural."72

Newman's own position is that the Illative Sense, if honest in its search for truth, will gradually shed error. That is why men of entirely different character, and with diverse background, will end up, intellectually and spiritually, in the same place, for example, in the Catholic Church. It is not so much where a man begins that determines his final intellectual and spiritual home, but rather the quality and strength of his honesty and love for truth.

71 Ward, p. 249.

72 Newman, Grammar, p. 311. On the following page, Newman sharply sums up Montaigne in a rather Pascalian manner: "Montaigne was endowed with a good estate, health, leisure, and an easy temper, literary tastes, and a sufficiency of books: he could afford thus to play with life, and the abysses into which it leads us"—Ibid., 312.
This intellectual honesty and openness, however, is in no way consonant with the attitude which passively waits for truth, which expects truth to do the seeking. Truth must be actively sought; the attainment of truth in many cases partakes of the nature of a conquest. Nevertheless, truth can and will be attained by the honest mind. That is why Newman does not wish to begin the search for truth by doubting everything.

This third chapter has shown how the Illative Sense concludes to truth. In this conclusion to truth, the two conditions which may limit an inference are both removed. Probability and dependence upon premises are done away with when truth is attained. Therefore, the explanation of how the mind passes from a conditioned inference to an unconditioned assent has in the main been accounted for. The Illative Sense, however, has still a further relation to assent. For the Illative Sense is affected and modified by the man as he is, by the concrete man with his passions, prejudices, blindness, and moral deficiencies. These moral factors not only have their place when the Illative Sense perceives and concludes to truth, but also when the Illative Sense commands or sanctions assent. This sanction of the Illative Sense is the further relation to the act

73 Ibid., 425-426.

74 Ibid., 377. "Of the two, I would rather have to maintain that we ought to begin with believing everything that is offered to our acceptance, than that it is our duty to doubt of everything. The former, indeed, seems the true way of learning. In that case, we soon discover and discard what is contradictory to itself; and error having always some portion of truth in it, and the truth having a reality which error has not, we may expect, that when there is an honest purpose and fair talents, we shall somehow make our way forward, the error falling off from the mind, and the truth developing and occupying it." This passage of itself should be fair evidence against those who hint that Newman was himself a sceptic.
of assent. This sanction, moreover, operates in an area of freedom. Because man has a free will, the conclusion to truth does not always necessitate or coerce assent. Man can refuse to give assent even to ascertained truth. These factors of freedom, of will, of moral disposition, and of sanction, therefore, will be discussed further in the next chapter which treats the sanction of the Illative Sense.
CHAPTER IV
THE SANCTION OF THE
ILLATIVE SENSE

Truth is the object of assent. Therefore, once the Illative Sense has concluded to truth, assent should automatically follow. The conclusion which the Illative Sense reaches in informal inference is, consequently, the sufficient basis of assent.

As was noted before, an inference may have two conditions. First, the conclusion of a formal inference reaches only probability in concrete matters. Secondly, the conclusion of any inference, whether it be formal, informal, or natural, follows from and depends on its premisses, no matter what their number. The first obstacle of probability is no hindrance to the Illative Sense, since, in its use of either informal or natural inference, it concludes to truth. The second obstacle of dependence on premisses, which is operative in all inference, should also be removed in this same conclusion to truth. Once a conclusion is recognized as true insofar as it proceeds from true premisses, it can be recognized as true in itself. There is no longer any need for premisses. The conclusion may be held as true even if the premisses are forgotten. Once the mind has perceived the truth of one of its conclusions, it need no longer remember the premisses upon which that conclusion depends.

With the concession of these preliminary remarks, there would be no further problem with assent were it automatically given to ascertained truth. But
man can freely refuse assent, even to the truth which he recognizes. The purpose of this thesis is to show how the mind or Illative Sense passes from a conditioned inference to an unconditioned assent. This thesis then, in describing how the mind arrives at truth, the adequate basis of assent, has taken only the first step, for man has free will and can refuse assent. The question may be asked then whether the Illative Sense has any further relation to assent besides its task of reaching truth? The answer is yes; the Illative Sense is also a sanction of assent.

The purpose of this fourth chapter, therefore, will be to explain the Illative Sense as a sanction of assent, for, in doing this, the full relation of the Illative Sense to assent will be made clear, and the process of passing from a conditioned inference to an unconditioned assent will be completed. Consequently, this chapter will first treat the act of assent as a free act; secondly, the Illative Sense as sanction; thirdly, the place of will in the act of assent; and fourthly, the sanction of the Illative Sense as an antidote to rationalism and scepticism.

Assent is a free act, a personal act for which the agent is responsible.\(^1\) Newman seldom dwells on this aspect of assent, but its theme is implicit throughout the whole of the Grammar. The importance of this notion of freedom for the supernatural act of faith can, of course, be readily seen. The reality of the freedom of assent can be found both in experience and in argument. The fact of this freedom is experientially evident. An assent is neither the same as an inferential conclusion, nor is it just a confirmatory shadow which neces-

\(^1\)Ibid., 232.
sarily follows an inference. Assents have a degree of independence, and this independence is manifested in everyday life. Newman lists two instances. First, assents can fail while the reasons for them are still in force. Secondly, sometimes in spite of strong and convincing reasons, assent is withheld.

The reasons for these seeming peculiarities are many. In the case of a failure of assent, one may find the cause in some rational difficulty which was not considered before. At other times the cause of this failure cannot be discovered, and its implicit reason may well be an illegitimate fear with its consequent destruction of a personal commitment.

Many factors play a role in the instance of an assent not given. First, prejudice, bad will, and other moral difficulties may hinder assent, and this not only in coming to truth, but also in accepting truth. Newman quotes the old rhyme as a case in point: "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." Secondly, assent being a free and responsible act, one might fear to commit himself too quickly, especially if the matter is of moment. Thirdly, the evidence in most of human reasoning is not compulsive and does not necessitate assent. Knowledge for Newman is in most cases a result of a "putting together" of evidences. In this process there are two elements, the evidence and the mind. The evidence is a mass of indications which singly or to-

2Ibid., 167-168.
3Ibid., 168.
4Ibid., 169.
5Ibid.,
gether are but probable in relation to the conclusion which the mind or Illative Sense ultimately reaches. This conclusion is above and beyond the evidence, and consequently, the evidence cannot force it. There is, therefore, a gap between the two which must be bridged by the Illative Sense. In this way the will enters into the act of assent. Because the evidence of itself is not coercive, the person concerned is thrown back upon his Illative Sense and its perfection, and upon his own moral perfection and disposition of will. Good will may incline him to the acceptance of truth, but bad will may incline him away.

Finally, in that limited area of strict demonstration and of formal inference, the evidence, when it can lead to truth, has the power to command assent. However, even here, assent may be free, for the person involved can still will not to give his assent.

Assent therefore is a free act. What relation then does the Illative Sense have to this free act of assent? The conclusion to truth of the Illative Sense is, as has been seen, the sufficient basis of assent. But the Illative Sense plays a further role; it is also a sanction on assent.

The use of the term sanction might in this case seem strange. Sanction usually refers to the reward or punishment which follows the commission of a good or evil deed, or which is the crown of a good or evil life. Sanction in this sense also acts as a motive for good deeds or a deterrent from bad deeds. Newman uses the word sanction in a different way. Sanction for him does not mean a reward or punishment; it does, however, partake of the notion of a motive or deterrent. One of the meanings which Webster's Dictionary gives sanc-
tion is "that which induces observance of law or custom." Newman uses the word in a similar way, as that which induces assent. Thus the Illative Sense in its perception of truth induces, or in a stronger sense, commands assent.

In what way can the Illative Sense be said to command assent? The Illative Sense commands assent, or sanctions assent in the Newmanian sense of the word, by the mere fact that it has concluded to truth. In this conclusion to truth, the Illative Sense acts according to its nature, which is to arrive at truth in concrete matters through a process of either informal or natural inference. This nature, as shall be seen, is an expression of the laws and nature of the mind. To refuse assent to such a conclusion to truth, therefore, is to violate one's mind. The Illative Sense is a sanction, therefore, because it is an expression of the human mind and its operations which must be followed and obeyed.

This is important in concrete circumstances, especially in matters of religion, for in such cases one cannot always await a strict demonstration. One must act, and he will never act if he insists on strict proof for everything. "Life is not long enough," Newman says, "for a religion of inferences; we shall never have done beginning, if we determine to begin with proof. We shall ever be laying our foundations . . . . We shall never get at our first principles. Resolve to believe nothing, and you must prove your proofs and analyze your elements, sinking farther and farther, and finding 'in the lowest depth a lower deep,' till you come to the broad bosom of scepticism."8

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7 Webster's Dictionary, p. 880.
8 Newman, Grammar, p. 95.
According to Newman, the normal way of coming to truth is through a process of informal inference in which the mind with its illative power adds, as it were, something to its evidence. Many men, however, theoretically at least, refuse to give their assent to truths which are not attained by a process of strict logical thought. If a proposition cannot be thus proved, they term it a probability. These men, therefore, often fail to decide, choose, and act because they are determined to await a strict logical demonstration. This is especially true in matters of religion. Newman condemns such an attitude of mind. He says that in mathematics one is justified in not assenting to a conclusion which is not demonstratively proved. In concrete matters, however, in matters of faith, one cannot wait for such strict proof; he must be content with a more supple and less scientific mode of proof. When therefore one has discerned a true conclusion through such a process, he has a duty in conscience to give his unconditioned assent.9

The origin of this duty to give assent to non-demonstrative proofs is twofold, being both in conscience and in the sanction of the Illative Sense, or in the laws of the mind as the foundation for this sanction. Newman constantly emphasises the fact that man must accept himself as he is, as he experientially finds himself, and not endeavor to overload his experience with a priori theories which do not conform to reality.10 In this, man must be open to conscience and the laws of his mind.

9Ibid., 412.
10Ibid., 347.
The mind with its illative power has laws according to which it operates. One elementary duty of man is to discover these laws and obey them. In this is founded the sanction of the Illative Sense which sanctions insofar as it has concluded to truth through the instrumentality of informal inference. When the Illative Sense, therefore, concludes to truth through this inferential process, and commands assent, one has no legitimate alternative but to obey. If one refuses his assent, he violates his mind.

These laws of the mind are founded proximately in human nature and ultimately in God Himself. Therefore, when one refuses to assent to a truth ascertained through informal inference, he not only violates his mind, but his nature also and the will of God. Consequently, one has a duty in conscience to give assent to truth in matters short of demonstration or perception. Newman frequently alludes to this duty in conscience throughout the Grammar.

The Illative Sense then is a sanction by the mere fact that it has concluded to truth. This conclusion to truth is an expression of mental laws and human nature, and therefore involves duty and conscience. The Illative Sense under this aspect of sanction can be fully understood only in this relation to conscience which, in its cooperation with the Illative Sense, assumes the function of a co-sanction.

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 345.
13 Ibid., 347, 351.
14 Ibid., 318, 345, 347, 349, 412, 426.
"Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world." 15 Newman wrote these words in his *Apologia* describing the importance of conscience in his own personal life. So dominant is this voice of conscience in Newman's writings, that some critics like Henri Bremond have not hesitated to call it the grand principle of his philosophical and religious thought, 16 while others have tried to make conscience the basis of all concrete knowledge in the *Grammar*. 17

Conscience has many meanings in Newman's writings. The usual definition of conscience, however, is perhaps best seen in the *Grammar* where for several pages Newman gives a concentrated psychological description of its nature and operation. He regards conscience first of all as an act of the mind. 18 This should be stressed because of the various "sentimentalist" interpretations often attached to Newman's thought. It is true that Newman uses words such as sense

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17 Boekraad, pp. 40-41, 284-285, 295, 299, 300. On page 284 Boekraad says: "A new Philosophical problem thus confronts us: how is the individual mind related to the conquest of truth. Newman solved it by reducing the whole of our efforts and actions as individuals to conscience as the normative principle governing the mind as well in its activities. If conscience is disregarded, there is the possibility that the mind will run wild to destroy itself finally in scepticism. To prevent this, Newman maintains that in the individual it is essential that the exercise of the mind should be regulated by fidelity to conscience. Conscience, therefore, has to be respected if we wish to settle questions of truth in the concrete, and that is why Newman, in dealing with the acquisition of truth in the concrete, reduced the question of the capacity of the individual mind for truth to conscience as its ultimate basis."

and feeling to describe conscience. But the difficulty which arises seems to be primarily one of terminology. Newman gives an analysis of conscience in the concrete, in a person as he or she actually is, with intellect, will, and emotions. Feeling, then, means not just an emotion without rational grounds, but rather a recognition attended by emotions. Moreover, Newman uses the word sense as he does in Illative Sense, with a significance similar to good sense or common sense.19

Conscience viewed as a mental act has two aspects. The first aspect is conscience acting as moral sense; the second is conscience acting as a sense of duty.20 Conscience as moral sense is an habitual abstract recognition that certain acts are in themselves right or wrong. It is the speculative knowledge of moral values, the conviction, for example, that stealing is wrong or that self-sacrifice is good. This recognition, which originates in experience, usually both precedes and follows upon one's acts.21

Conscience as a sense of duty, on the other hand, is the awareness of personal well-being or guilt which follows the commission of a good or evil act. This aspect of conscience, which is attended by emotion, implies the recognition that certain acts are not only wrong in themselves, but forbidden also to me, an individual, in this particular case.22

19 Ibid., 345.
20 Ibid., 105.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 106.
It is important to note that neither aspect of conscience thus far dealt with in the Grammar corresponds to what is usually meant by conscience, that is, either the faculty of discerning right or wrong, or, and this primarily, the particular application of a general rule of right or wrong. For, conscience as moral sense is habitual, abstract, and general, while conscience as a sense of duty follows after a good or evil deed. However, it will be seen that Newman does give these further meanings to conscience.

The real importance of conscience in Newman's mind is its function as a source of knowledge. Both conscience as moral sense and as a sense of duty are sources of knowledge, the one of ethical knowledge, the other of religious knowledge. The immediate concern of this chapter is conscience as a source of ethical knowledge, although conscience as a teacher of religion will be mentioned later.

How are general rules of conduct applied to particular cases? How does one know that a particular instance fits under the general rule? In his Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, Newman distinguishes a third meaning of the word conscience. Conscience under this third aspect is the particular application of a general rule of right and wrong. "Secondly, I observe that conscience is not a judgment upon any speculative truth, any abstract doctrine, but bears immediately on conduct, on something to be done or not done. 'Conscience,' says St. Thomas, 'is the practical judgment or dictate of reason by which we judge what hic et nunc is to be done as being good, or to be avoided as evil.'"24

23 Ibid., 106, 389-390
In the *Grammar of Assent*, which was written only four years earlier than the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, this aspect of conscience is under the direction of the Illative Sense which becomes the faculty of discerning right and wrong in the particular instance. Newman notes in the *Grammar* that the Illative Sense is the *organon investigandi* in all concrete matters, including those of duty. When Newman comes to define the action of the Illative Sense more fully, he compares it to Aristotle's *phronesis*, except that the Illative Sense has as its province the whole range of concrete matter. The Illative Sense then functions as conscience in contingent circumstances, applying general rules to particular instances of conduct.

Newman therefore identifies the Illative Sense with conscience as the organ of discerning the particular application of right and wrong. When one realizes, for example, that in this particular case he is bound in conscience to give assent to a non-demonstrative conclusion, this function of conscience is the task of the Illative Sense. The source, however, of the general rule that the laws of the mind must be obeyed is not necessarily the operation of the Illative Sense through the instrumentality of either natural or informal inference, but can be had from one immediate experience. Conscience as moral

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26 Cf. pp. 28-30 in chapter two of this thesis.

27 Newman, *Grammar*, p. 65: "I am not of course dreaming of denying the objective existence of the Moral Law, nor our instinctive recognition of the immutable difference in the moral quality of acts, as elicited in us by one instance of them. Even one act of cruelty, ingratitude, generosity, or justice reveals to us at once intensive the immutable distinction between those qualities and their contraries; that is, in that particular instance and pro hac vice. From such experience—an experience which is ever recurring—we proceed to abstract and generalize."
sense, therefore, is not necessarily identified with the mind qua Illative Sense.

Since, therefore, conscience as moral sense is not of necessity one and the same as the Illative Sense, the source of the sanction of assent remains two-fold, being founded proximately in the Illative Sense insofar as it concludes to truth and thus expresses the normal operations and laws of the mind, and ultimately in conscience as moral sense which usually has its ground in immediate experience, or, as Newman says, in intuition.

For these reasons, the Illative Sense must cooperate with conscience in its conclusion to truth in concrete matters. This cooperation increases or diminishes in proportion to the self-commitment demanded by the matter under consideration or already concluded. In matters of religion, where this self-commitment is difficult and highly demanding, the process of arriving at truth and assenting to it must be done under a sense of duty and with a close cooperation with conscience. In this sense perhaps can be understood the position of Father Boekraad who reduces all efforts in the attainment and affirmation of truth to conscience as the ultimate basis. 28

The fact that assent in concrete matters is a free act, and the fact that the Illative Sense in its conclusion to and affirmation of truth must cooperate with conscience as moral sense, reveal the strong and direct influence which the will has in the act of assent. In the Grammar Newman hardly ever explicitly mentions the will as a factor in knowledge. In various of his letters,

however, he does emphasize the will, especially when speaking about an act of supernatural faith.29

As was noted in chapter three, the conclusion to truth in concrete matters is made by way of indirect judgment. That is, the conclusion is rather foreseen or predicted than actually attained, for the evidence of itself does not logically touch the conclusion. The judgment involved, therefore, takes a negative form. The conclusion cannot be otherwise; it is inevitable; it is as good as proved. Because of this gap between evidence and conclusion, because the evidence cannot of itself compel either a conclusion or the consequent assent, the mind with its illative power is not necessitated to draw a conclusion or give assent. In many cases, however, the mind recognizes a duty to conclude and assent. In this area of indirect proof, conscience, and duty, the will enters in and exerts its influence over the mind, assisting or hindering it in its acts of concluding and assenting. A parallel example may be found in the words of St. Ignatius: "For although this faculty (the understanding) has not the freedom which the will has, and naturally assents to what is presented to it as true, there are, however, many instances where the evidence of the known truth is not coercive, in which it can with the help of the will favor one side or the other."30

It is quite clear, therefore, that one’s disposition of heart and will enters into the act of assent to truth. Moral factors have their role not only

29 Ward, pp. 242, 276. On the latter page, Newman is quoted as saying "..... as you will see, she confuses the conclusion from evidence, with the act of assent which depends on the will."

in the conclusion to truth, but also in the assent to or acceptance of truth. As was seen before, Newman explicitly notes the effect of prejudice, fear, and bad will on the act of assent, especially in their role of hindering or obstructing this act.

In summary, this chapter has shown so far that assent is a free act in concrete reasoning, that the Illative Sense in its conclusion to truth acts as a sanction for assent, that in this function as sanction, the Illative Sense must cooperate with conscience, so that as a result conscience assumes the form of a co-sanction. This chapter has also described the consequent influence of the will over the act of assent in concrete matters, and, briefly, the necessity of good will or good disposition. Lastly, there remains to be seen the manner in which Newman applies the Illative Sense and conscience as antidotes against rationalism and scepticism.

The unity of Newman's life must be seen in his almost continuous struggle against religious rationalism, or, as he so often called it, liberalism. The main tenets of this liberalism, and its implications have already been discussed in the first chapter. Newman's chief objection against this rationalism, especially as expressed in the teachings of John Locke, is that it limits the attainment of truth in one-perceptual matters to a process of formal inference or syllogistic demonstration, to a strict correspondence between evidence and conclusion. Such a doctrine, Newman maintains, in no way conforms to experience and to the normal operation of the human mind. Newman's own drift away from formal inference and logical demonstration as methods sufficient for all

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31 Cf. pp. 3-6 in chapter one of this thesis.
investigation opposes, as is evident, this type of rationalism.

In practice rationalists did not themselves demand this strict proof for every fact or duty to which they gave an unconditional assent, and in consequence their abstract and a priori theories were only paper theories. However, this refusal on the part of many to decide and accept on evidence short of demonstration or actual perception is one of the basic causes assigned by Newman for scepticism. Newman was convinced that anyone who resolved to give assent only to that which was brought home to him by strict proof would gradually doubt one truth after another until he ended in complete scepticism.

This was especially true in matters of religion. In his Apologia, Newman calls this tendency of the mind "the all-corroding, all-dissolving scepticism of the intellect in religious inquiries." While Newman does not deny that truth is the object of the intellect, he does maintain that fallen man is being dealt with. "I am not speaking here of right reason, but of reason as it acts in fact and concretely in fallen man. I know that even the unaided reason, when correctly exercised, leads to a belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in a future retribution; but I am considering the faculty of reason actually and historically; and in this point of view, I do not think I am wrong in saying its tendency is towards a simple unbelief in matters of religion." The solution to this problem of rationalism, especially religious rationalism, is the Illative Sense under the aspect of sanction and in cooperation

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32 Newman, Grammar, p. 95.


34 Ibid.
with conscience. As has been seen, one knows the differences between right and wrong through conscience as moral sense. One primary lesson which man must learn is the duty of accepting himself and his nature as law. Consequently, one must obey the laws of his mind which are not only the manifestation of his nature, but also, ultimately, of God's wisdom and will. The mind or Illusive Sense, therefore, in its conclusion to truth, acts as a sanction of assent. If one does not obey and give assent, he violates both his mind and his nature. One becomes obligated in conscience, therefore, to give assent. This is especially important since in concrete matters truth is not attained through a process of formal inference. Some men of a rationalistic bent balk at this and consequently violate their mind and nature by refusing to accept any conclusion unconditionally which is not attained by means of a fully explicit logical demonstration.

A good example of this can be seen in the way in which Newman proves the existence of God. Newman proves God, not through a process of strict demonstration, but rather through conscience as a sense of duty. Conscience as a sense of duty, as will be remembered, is the recognition of personal well-being or guilt which follows after the commission of a good or evil deed. This aspect of conscience, which is always attended by emotion, implies the recognition that certain acts are not only good or bad in themselves, but also enjoined on or forbidden to me, an individual. Newman's argument to God develops the im-

35 Newman, Grammar, p. 105. Newman's purpose here is not primarily to prove through conscience that God exists, although he actually does do this. He wishes rather to show how one apprehends God and gives a real assent to Him. "However, I repeat, what I am directly aiming at, is to explain how we gain an image of God and give a real assent to the proposition that He exists."
Newman's proof for God can be summarized in three steps. First, conscience leads to emotions of reverence, awe, hope, and fear. Secondly, one feels emotions, especially such emotions as here listed, only in the presence of a person, but never when confronting a mere object. Thirdly, conscience, therefore, implies a person. "These feelings in us are such as require for their cause an intelligent being." Furthermore, conscience implies One who is not man's equal, but who is superior to man, One who is man's Lord and Master, who is his lawgiver, and to whom man is responsible. In short, conscience for Newman implies God.

This knowledge of God depends on an implicit, almost spontaneous act of reasoning. Through a number of confrontations with conscience, and through various, almost immediate processes of weighing and balancing, one gradually discerns the presence of a law, and concludes from this that where there is a law, there is also a lawgiver and judge. This process is carried on by the Illative Sense through the instrumentality of either natural or informal inference. This argument to God through conscience is perhaps the basis of Newman's

36 Ibid., 108.

37 Ibid., 109: "No wonder then that it (conscience) always implies what that sense (of the beautiful) only sometimes implies; that it always involves the recognition of a living object, towards which it is directed. Inanimate things cannot stir our affections; these are correlative with persons. If, as is the case, we feel responsibility, are ashamed, are frightened, at transgressing the voice of conscience, this implies that there is One to whom we are responsible, before whom we are shamed, whose claims upon us we fear."

38 Ibid., 110.

39 Ibid.
belief in God of the years 1843 and 1844, which, he writes, was founded "on a ground of probability." 40

Through conscience as a sense of duty, therefore, man can attain a knowledge of God, which, although more or less implicit, is able to command assent. A religious rationalist will reject this knowledge of God, which he himself may have previously accepted, on the ground that it has not been really proved to him. Clearly, this rejection is in Newman's eyes a violation of the sanction of the Illative Sense and of conscience. But such a rejection has a further consequence; it leads to scepticism. On the other hand, it is just this kind of knowledge of God through conscience which is a powerful deterrent to extreme rationalism and scepticism for the simple reason that such knowledge is based on a supple and informal mode of proof which, although it does not satisfy the strict requirements of scientific demonstration, proceeds nevertheless according to the laws of the human mind and the laws of human nature.

40 Cf., p. 47 in chapter three of this thesis. See also Newman, Apologia, p. 241: "Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, or a polytheist when I looked into the world." These words were written about ten years after 1844. One wonders whether Newman's grounds of conviction would have changed radically in that space of time.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to explain the relationship between Newman's Illative Sense and the act of assent. This relationship is most clearly revealed if the passage from a conditioned inference to an unconditioned assent is studied. In such a passage, one rises from a conditioned inference to a point where he is justified in giving his unconditioned assent.

Two obstacles must be overcome before the independent act of certain assent can be given. First, formal or demonstrative inference reaches only probability in concrete matter. Secondly, the inferential conclusion, whether it be the conclusion of a formal, informal, or natural inference, necessarily depends upon its premises. These obstacles can be removed if and when one attains to truth. The conquest of truth in the concrete, therefore, becomes the first and most important problem to be solved. The question as to how the mind arrives at truth in non-perceptual matters is then Newman's main difficulty. His solution lies in the operation of the Illative Sense, in the power of the mind to judge correctly in contingent circumstances. This conclusion to truth which the Illative Sense draws is the most basic and most important relation of the Illative Sense to the act of assent.

One the Illative Sense has concluded to truth, the act of assent should automatically follow. One has discovered truth, and truth is the adequate basis of assent. But the act of assent in concrete matters remains a free act,
because the conclusion which the Illative Sense draws is above and beyond the evidence presented. Even when one has discerned the truth in concrete reasoning, he is not necessarily forced to assent to this truth. The Illative Sense, however, insofar as it concludes to truth, acts as a sanction on assent and makes it a duty in conscience for one to assent. As sanction the Illative Sense acts in cooperation with conscience which assumes the role of co-sanction. In this area of conscience, freedom, and duty, the will enters in and exerts its influence on the mind. Here especially is seen the influence of moral factors on the intellect and the consequent need of good will and good moral character.

In the interests of further clarification and by way of conclusion of this study, a few summary remarks concerning Newman's epistemology will be added. Newman, first of all, treats of reasoning and the acquisition of truth in concrete matters where, he says, formal inference (verbal reasoning, syllogistic reasoning, strict demonstration) is inadequate. Newman's task becomes, therefore, an analysis of the operations of the mind. How does the mind attain truth? What is the true methodology of the mind? These problems are important, for Newman greatly extends the limits of concrete matter and concrete reasoning, while the realm of abstract reasoning is correspondingly restricted. One further reason for Newman's interest in the concrete lies in the fact that concrete truth stirs the will and emotions and leads to action and practice.

The true methodology of the mind in concrete matters is twofold. One is named natural inference, the other informal inference. These two types of inference differ mainly according to the degree of explicitness and consciousness with which they proceed. Newman is primarily interested in informal inference in the Grammar, perhaps because the explicitness and fuller consciousness of in-
formal inference make it a more apt instrument for investigation. Informal inference, like natural inference, is supra-logical and carries out and applies formal inference in concrete matters. Informal inference is a method by which the mind or Illative Sense rises to truth from an accumulation of converging probabilities. In such a process, the evidence taken by itself is but probable in relation to the conclusion which the Illative Sense reaches. This holds true even when the evidence is taken as a whole. There is, therefore, a gap between the conclusion reached and the evidence, and this gap must be bridged by the Illative Sense. The Illative Sense bridges this gap by discerning the limit or the point toward which the probabilities converge (if they do converge!) and then judging that this conclusion or limit cannot be otherwise than true. The Illative Sense is hindered or helped in this process by its perfection and experience and by the moral perfection of the person judging.

Various conclusions follow. First, knowledge for Newman is for the most part a putting together of evidences. The Illative Sense must discern interconnections and relationships between evidences. Secondly, the intellect or Illative Sense is given a vast role in the conquest and attainment of truth. The mind is not a mere passive receiver or spectator, but has an active part to play in its knowledge. Thirdly, the normal way of proceeding to truth is through a process of either natural inference or informal inference, both of which are inductive, rather than through deductive formal inference. Fourthly, in most of human knowledge, there is an area of choice where the will enters in, and in which the moral perfection of the person has great influence. In this area where the evidence is not compulsive, the will can determine the direction
which the Illative Sense takes. According to Newman, this general field of knowledge extends even to scientific and philosophical investigation.

At this point various questions might arise. Throughout this thesis, we have tried to keep within the framework of Newman's own thinking as he himself has sketched that framework in his *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. But further questions are legitimate which ask how this teaching of Newman is related to the traditional scholastic doctrine on the nature of the intellect and inference. Are Newman's teachings ultimately compatible with the theses of scholastic logic and psychology? Or are the divergencies so great that one must choose to be either a Scholastic or a Newmanite? That Newman does not merely repeat the traditional scholastic explanations should be clear enough at this stage of the work. All the preceding pages were an attempt to show the originality and independence of Newman's thinking.

The exact relationship, however, between Newman's doctrine and the more standard explanations given in scholastic manuals is a more difficult question. A complete answer would be a book in itself. However, a few tentative conclusions can be drawn which will locate Newman's work in the larger context.

The majority of scholastic manuals treat of reason and reasoning as it was worked out by Aristotle in his *Analytics* and developed by Aquinas in his commentaries on Aristotle. This is demonstrative reasoning as it operates within speculative knowledge as formally scientific. Aristotle and Aquinas devote their explicit treatments of knowledge and reasoning to knowledge as science. Such formalized knowledge is essentially abstract, universal, and proceeds *via indicii* from principles to conclusions. Contingent individuals fall outside the concern of science as such, and knowledge of these contingent individuals
does not pertain to the perfection of speculative knowledge. It is this formally abstract and speculative knowledge which serves as the matter for reflection when Aristotle and Aquinas take up the logical and psychological questions of knowledge. They are for the most part content to restrict their discussions of knowledge to knowledge as science. There the inferences are formal, not natural or informal; the data are abstract and universal, not concrete and particular. The writers of the manuals continue to adopt this same point of view in their treatments of knowledge, and thereby by-pass the precise area in which Newman is working. Consequently, this study concludes that not only does Newman's teaching on informal inference not contradict or conflict with the positions of traditional scholastic doctrine, but it can and should be used to supplement and complete what would otherwise remain a discussion of only one type of reasoning and knowledge. Though analysis can fruitfully isolate the power of intellect and its proper functions to study them independently of the other powers of man, there is still need for a discussion of intellect precisely as conjoined to the sense powers (cognitive and appetitive) and the will in composite operations that, though unscientific, remain knowledge nonetheless. It is precisely in this area of unscientific, informal inference that Newman has given us new lights and insights that have the corroboration of our own noetic experience. Newman has not contradicted traditional scholasticism, but has wonderfully enriched it.

The precise mode, however, which informal inference follows in coming to its conclusions, namely that of the convergence of probabilities, has been objected to by some scholastics such as Father "Arcy. On the other hand, Frederick Wilhelmsen finds it difficult to see how Newman can be rejected on this point, and adds that "Newman's position seems to be a definite advance beyond the older tradition on the subject of certitude." On this point, then, there is no complete uniformity among Scholastics.

There have, of course, been many who have disagreed wholly or in part with Newman's conclusions in the Grammar of Assent. However this may be, the critic must approach and judge Newman on his own ground. Newman's method of approach, far from being based on a priori theories, is founded on experience and reflection on experience. His method is psychological and proceeds by way of analysis of the mind as it actually operates in the concrete. Newman, as has been seen, admittedly hated a priori theories showing how the mind should work. He was an ardent realist in his avowal that against the facts there is no argument.

Throughout the Grammar, Newman's endeavor is to go back to things, to facts, to the concrete world. "We are in the world of facts, and we use them; for there is nothing else to use. We do not quarrel with them, but we take them as they are, and avail ourselves of what they can do for us." His object, he says, is not to theorize, not to become a metaphysician, but to allow the


4Ibid., 343-344.
concrete world to impress itself on him and to discern what things actually are in the concrete and how they actually operate. Newman, therefore, severely criticizes John Locke and the rationalists because, not listening to the voice of being, they impose their own theories on the concrete world. This is true especially in the case of the operation of the mind. These a priori theories, however, do not fit the facts; they cannot be carried out into practice. Newman says of Locke: "He (Locke) takes a view of the human mind, in relation to inference and assent, which to me seems theoretical and unreal . . . . and that, as I think, because he consults his own ideal of how the mind ought to act, instead of interrogating human nature, as an existing thing, as it is found in the world." 5

Newman, on the other hand, begins by inquiring "what the experience of human life, as it is daily brought before us, teaches us." 6 He treats the subject of assent and inference "not according to a priori fitness, but according to the facts of human nature, as they are found in the concrete action of life." 7 Because of this return to the things themselves, because of the endeavor to strip the mind of prejudices, opinions, and theories, Newman has been called a phenomenologist by some, although his works antedate Husserl's by almost half a century. 8

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5 Ibid., 161.
6 Ibid., 166.
7 Ibid., 176.
The facts to which Newman goes back are ultimately the facts and experiences of his own life. Some inkling of this can be seen in this thesis' use of quotations from the Apologia which recounts Newman's gradual conversion. In the Grammar Newman's application of his thoughts in chapters five and ten reveal a justification in experience rather than a true application. Newman movingly sums up his method of approach in these words:

I begin with expressing a sentiment, which is habitually in my thoughts, whenever they are turned to the subject of mental or moral science . . . that in these provinces of inquiry egotism is true modesty. In religious inquiry each of us can speak only for himself, and for himself he has a right to speak. His own experiences are enough for himself, but he cannot speak for others; he cannot lay down the law; he can only bring his own experiences to the common stock of psychological facts. He knows what has satisfied and satisfies himself; if it satisfied him, it is likely to satisfy others; if, as he believes and is sure, it is true, it will approve itself to others also, for there is but one truth . . . But, however that may be, he brings together his reasons, and relies on them, because they are his own, and this is his primary evidence; and he has a second ground of evidence, in the testimony of those who agree with him. But his best evidence is the former, which is derived from his own thoughts.9

That Newman's attempt to analyze the mind in its operations was not a failure is testified to even by his critics.10 Father D'Arcy, who takes Newman to task in several places, claims nevertheless that he is Newman's disciple, and that, although much has been written on the subject of assent and certitude since Newman's day, "the Grammar of Assent still remains the masterpiece which no one can safely neglect."11 Father Coleridge, the editor of The Month, who

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11D'Arcy, p. 107.
remained in general non-committal toward Newman's work, admitted that "never, we believe, have the manifold, and all but contradictory, complexities of the human mind been treated with such unscrupulous reality."12

Newman himself was more modest about his work. He called it an essay, an attempt, because he considered it such. In a letter to Father Coleridge in 1871, Newman gives his own judgment of his book: "I am sensible it (the Grammar) may be full of defects, and certainly characterized by incompleteness and crudeness, but it is something to have started a problem, and mapped in part of a country, if I have done nothing more."13 Perhaps then defects may be discovered in the Grammar, perhaps too after long and careful study it will be found to be not wholly satisfactory in solving the problems it began with. Then, however, Newman's own opinion of his work must be remembered: it is a beginning, an attempt, a partial mapping out.


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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by John D. Ryan, S.J., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

October 22, 1959

Date

Signature of Adviser